

QUICK REFERENCE TO RESULTS-ORIENTED TRAINING

Best Practices Abridged for USAID Strategic Objective Teams

Prepared By:

**Andrew C. Gilboy
Consultant**

**Global Bureau
Human Capacity Development Center
United States Agency for International Development**

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How SO Teams Can Use Best Practices to Get Results

Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

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Plan Training Strategically

Q: I know that planning is needed, but our team members simply do not have time. How can we plan ahead when we are constantly behind?!

*A: It's a matter of time management and risk assessment. It is proven that if you invest time up-front to plan (and design) training correctly, you will **reduce time** spent later on trying to fix things or, worse, trying to discover if the training helped the team reach an IR. Why not plan **in advance** and reap the benefits later?*

Evaluations of training impact have shown the correlation between getting results and planning ahead. As teams work on their results framework (RF), strategic objectives (SOs), and results packages (RPs), they should be thinking HRD at each step along the way. Human resources development, and the vehicle we call *training*, remain by far USAID's most widely-used development intervention. Every team will use training. Whether our activity is "technical assistance" or "training," the major output is the **transfer of knowledge, skills and attitudes ("KSA")**. SO teams must therefore plan how they will reach their IRs – and how they can find out whether impact is occurring – before beginning a training activity.

If the SO team and its partners clearly identify the institutional performance gaps to address through training and understand from the outset the results aimed for, the indicators will already be established. That means it will be possible to *monitor* results along the way – something every team (and partner) needs to do. In short, planning training strategically ensures that each HRD activity will be linked to the team's IRs and limited training dollars will get the best return on investment.

Collaborate With Partners

Q: How can I collaborate with partners when they do not know what they need? Isn't this a nice concept but in reality a waste of time?

*A: The better question to ask is what is likely to happen if you *don't* work closely with partners in planning, implementing and monitoring training. Survey after survey of training impact has shown that USAID increases the chances of obtaining organizational performance change when the targeted institution works side-by-side throughout all aspects of the program. If you want results, **work with your partners**, even if it takes more time, and *especially* if you think they don't know what they need!*

By including partners from the onset, everyone will agree to the expected outcomes from the training program, understand the indicators to measure and decide who will monitor progress.

There are several “types” of partners that teams will encounter, among them: a) local institutions the training is expected to benefit and where performance change will hopefully affect the IRs; b) local training providers selected to plan and manage training and produce results; and c) USAID’s U.S. institutional contractors (either local or U.S.-based) that may be closely involved in implementing RP activities. Because SO teams do not typically implement and monitor training directly, they rely on the expertise of their partners to produce results that can be attributed to the SO team’s investment. Moreover, to achieve a degree of *sustainability*, the team must **share ownership** for the training activity with its principal partners.



➡ Target Organizational Performance Improvement ⬅

Q: Why shouldn't our team simply offer training grants to our partner institutions and get on with it? We know the organizations need strengthening, and we do that by offering training to qualified employees. So where's the big change from the old days?

*A: When you focus training on individuals, you reduce the likelihood of getting results that will lead to progress with your IRs. All long-term sustainable development has occurred through institutional change, not through haphazard training of people who “deserve” help, however well-intentioned. Of course, we train individuals, but **only when their acquisition of knowledge, skills or changed attitudes will lead to performance improvements at their institutions.** Otherwise, the SO team members will be*

As part of the development of the RF, teams get to know the organizations active in the mission’s priority sectors. They often help formulate USAID’s SOs and IRs. Once the CSP is approved, teams identify activities to achieve the IRs. Teams analyze key sectors and describe the roles of partner organizations in delivering the needed “services” to the people. This leads into RPs, through which most SO teams have passed, and equips them well to discern the precise institutional performance improvements needed to support changes in the sector.

The team must conduct a performance analysis of every institution it wishes to assist. This investigation identifies the difference between the what the organization is producing now and what the team, and the institution’s leadership, want it to produce in the future. The “performance gap analysis” can then be used to determine what activities will lead to the performance changes needed to move, however slowly, toward achieving an IR.

The team will need to determine whether training, technical assistance or commodity procurement, or a combination of these, will address the performance gaps identified. For example, if an SO’s partner institution could produce and disseminate price information on two food crops on regional radio weekly

rather than quarterly, the SO team estimates that both supply and demand for the commodity will increase (thereby addressing one of the IRs). An institutional assessment will reveal *why the institution is not performing at the desired level*. The team (either on its own or drawing on training technical assistance from GTD or a local contractor) will then decide what change will resolve the problem. Does the institution need new computers, training for the staff to use existing computers, or TA. (Be aware, however, that the delivery of TA is often “training” in that the technical advisor transfers skills and knowledge to counterparts.)



Before any training is agreed to, the SO team and its partners should know exactly the organizational performance constraints that the training will alleviate. If training cannot resolve the performance problem the team has identified, don’t train! If training can provide solutions, consider training but ask the critical question: **what performance improvements are we seeking by offering training to this institution?** This is indeed the “big change” (as asked in the box) from earlier days when USAID “allotted” graduate degrees to institutions that proposed candidates in their annual “training plans” with no indication how those coveted degrees would change the institution’s performance.

Training Needs Assessments

Q: What’s the difference between the “performance gap analysis” [described above] and a training needs assessment?

A: The SO team first needs to know what it wants a key partner organization to do *in the future* that it is not doing today. This concerns the organization’s output or productivity – what it does to help a team achieve an IR. The training needs assessment (“TNA”) hones in on the organizational unit where you have decided training is needed. Its purpose is to identify gaps or constraints in KSA (knowledge, skills and attitudes) that training can resolve. The TNA will lead *directly* to the design of a program, selection of trainees and

The training needs assessment parallels or follows the performance gap analysis. Neither needs to be complicated or lofty, and both can often be performed with little or no outside assistance. The SO team may decide that it cannot effect change through training for the entire institution (e.g., a ministry) but that an improvement in the output of several key divisions (for instance, research or data collection) may yield the desired change. In this case, the SO team and its partners target an *organizational unit* in the institution for training assistance. A TNA is then conducted for that unit.

Detailed information on how to conduct a TNA is found in the Best Practices guide. Remember that the purpose of the TNA is to identify and analyze the KSA deficiencies in the targeted organizational unit and to suggest how these deficiencies might be addressed through training. The methodology is standard and used by most corporations and organizations to discover what training is needed.

If the SO team members were clear as to the causes for performance problems in the institution (as a whole) or at the level of the organizational unit, the TNA will flow easily. However, teams should remember that some causes for performance failures, either internal or external, *cannot be resolved by training* (such as non-payment of salaries, lack of a management environment conducive to improvement, civil unrest, etc.). Training can only transfer knowledge, skills and introduce attitude changes.



A TNA begins its analysis at the institutional level (inspired by the performance gap analysis already completed) and works toward determining skill deficiencies at the employee-level in relation to job descriptions. It does not have to be elaborate. Rather, a solid TNA should clearly identify the skills or attitude changes that specific employees in the targeted organizational unit need to improve their productivity. Again, ask common-sense questions to help focus the TNA: “what should this unit be doing that it is not currently doing (the “performance gap”)?” and “what do the employees in the unit need to know to close that gap to increase the unit’s output, productivity or service quality?” The training needs assessment will answer these questions and identify the specific KSAs to be transferred to the trainees.

Armed with this information, the SO team, in collaboration with partners in the institution, can **plan training strategically**. They can now easily write a Scope of Work that includes, a) a description of the performance problem to be resolved through training, b) an objective for the training showing the link to an IR and c) specific skills or attitude changes that need changing. This SOW becomes, in fact, the RFP and contract for a training provider to design and implement the training.

Select Trainees with Potential to Initiate Change

Q: *Can we leave the selection of trainees up to the partner institution? If we believe in empowerment, why does the SO team have to get involved with selection?*

A: Yes, you can if Best Practices have been followed. If your team has already worked closely with the partner in identifying the training needed, your role in selection can be minimal (such as helping decide on criteria for selection or reviewing candidate profiles). Selection becomes almost routine if the proper background analysis and planning have been done. However, since the SO team is accountable for results, it will want assurances that the partner institution conducts itself appropriately. Are your partners selecting the appropriate trainees with the ability to learn and replicate training to others? Are the employees in the targeted work unit being selected? Empowerment? Yes, but with some preconditions.

It is self-evident that even if all the other Best Practices have been faithfully applied, and the selection of the people to be trained is flawed, the results anticipated from the training may not occur and performance changes targeted not achieved.

Correlations have been found between training impact and the trainee's involvement in and endorsement of the training program. In other words, trainees must *buy into* their program, *agree to* acquire the skills and knowledge, and *commit to* applying (and sharing) their new skills and knowledge with other employees at the work place. Prior to the start of the training program, trainees should clearly understand what is expected of them upon their return. Trainees need to know how their training fits into resolving performance problems at the institution and contribute to the SO team's specific IR.

Correlations also exist between training impact and the degree of interest and involvement on the part of the employee's supervisor in obtaining results from the investment in training. Supervisors need to buy into the training program in order to smooth the way for application of changes brought back by the trainees.

For training that targets attitude changes, selection criteria might include leadership qualities, aptitude, a strong desire for achievement, and a commitment to the apply the fruits of the training program to the organization. For larger, in-country skill-building programs targeting organizational units (for instance, in accounting, computers, marketing, etc.), the SO team may not require the same leadership potential but may focus on skill aptitudes.

Design Cost-Effective Programs

Q: *In the past, USAID funded so much training and we wonder if it all brought about any change. How can we be sure to get results from training even if we follow all the Best Practices?*

A: Many USAID employees ask the same question. Much of the failure of training in the past was due to the training providers having inadequate and inaccurate information about training needs. How can an architect custom-design a house to match your requirements without an exact description of what you want and need? It is the responsibility of the SO team to write or obtain a precise SOW based on solid performance analysis and training needs assessment, then to find the training experts to design the program (or select an "off-the-shelf" one). Don't expect the training provider to produce results without knowing the trainee's capacity, needs and objectives.

In addition to content questions, the SO teams should consider other factors in selecting a training provider, such as location (in-country, third-country, U.S.), format of training (large conference, adult training-style workshop, intensive course, degree studies, managerial, vocational) and duration (short-term, long-term). In preparing budgets, and monitoring services as needed, as to ensure that skills and knowledge

be sure to include planning, assessing well as the critical follow-on activities acquired are applied at the work



Support the Application of KSA After Training

Q: *It looks like you're trying to give a new name to an old concept – **follow-on**. Realistically, how can SO teams or HCD officers help trainees apply their new skills – what you call **Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes** – when our team has to move on to new training? This is the real problem. What actually works in follow-on?*

A: First, you've recognized that you must do something, and that's a good start. If you do nothing, you will not know what results your team's investment has yielded. Second, you've identified the problem - lack of knowledge about what works. Follow-on takes many forms, some as simple as a telephone call or on-site visit once every quarter. Others may require a mission SOW to obtain services from a contractor to help the team and its partners **leverage the team's investment in training to ensure results**.

Transferring the benefits of training to the work place is key to achieving the results your team is anticipating. The best way to ensure adequate and appropriate *post-training support* is to plan it early-on when designing the program with the team's organizational partners and the trainees. Make a simple plan, with benchmarks, of what the trainees will do upon return, and then obtain agreement on the details. This becomes the team's *training contract* with the organization and the individual trainees, and almost by itself, will do more to promote *application of KSA* than any amount of pressure to do "follow-up."

These are some of the types of support the team may need to undertake to ensure that the trainees do not revert to old ways:

- maintain strong links (site-visits, phone calls, meetings, etc.) with supervisors and partners with whom the team collaborated while designing the training program
- keep communication lines open directly with trainees to see whether (and how) they are applying their new knowledge; stay close to their success or failures;
- reinforce success stories among trainees (from different organizations or within the same) to help bolster their attempts to **introduce work-place improvements**;
- involve USAID leadership in monitoring and pressuring the partner institution to accept and welcome change from their employees
- lean on returned USAID trainees (through alumni or professional groups) to assist the team in helping employees apply their skills and bring about change;

These are just a few ways a team and its partners can support the all-important transfer to the work place of the new KSA that USAID has provided. If the SO team does not have the time or means to provide post-training support, then contract it out to one of the following: a) a mission institutional contractor already working with the partner institution on another activity; b) the training provider that organizes the training, if in-country; or c) a discrete "follow-on" activity described in a SOW that could

be implemented through GTD. Because a team may not have the capacity to manage post-training support is no excuse for not doing it!

Monitor Training for Results

Q: What is the easiest and least-costly way to monitor results?

A: Good question. Two keys to success: **plan monitoring early and keep it simple.** Collect only the data you absolutely need to track changes in your IR indicators. Remember that if you have applied these Best Practices from the beginning, you will already have most, if not all, the indicators and information you need (refer to the Performance Gap Analysis and TNA earlier). Armed with your indicators and knowledge about what performance changes the team is hoping for, employ Kirkpatrick's four levels of evaluation (described below) as a guide. It's simple, time-tested and easy to understand. Monitoring is not something a consultant does after the training is over. We

In the past, USAID evaluated training by measuring numbers of participants and training programs and the resources spent. The focus was on keeping the participant numbers high. For decades missions aimed at creating a "critical mass" of trained people, often to fill public-sector positions needed by growing economies or newly-independent nations. Evaluations were generally "tracer studies" identifying the percentage of participants who returned and to what extent they occupied positions of higher authority. Few ever investigated carefully the changes that resulted from these investments.



In the reengineered environment, SO teams need to stimulate institutional change that can lead to progress in reaching their IRs. In this environment, the focus shifts from training individuals to helping institutions improve performance. How can this process be measured ?

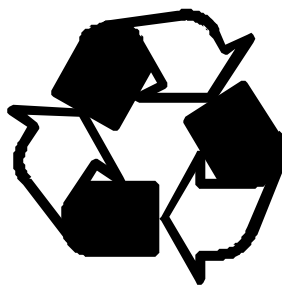
In a landmark work published in the late 1950s for U.S. corporations, Donald Kirkpatrick proposed to aim training evaluations at four levels of inquiry, described in the box below:

Kirkpatrick's Four Levels of Evaluation

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| Level 1 | <u>Reaction:</u> how did participants react to the training (content, instructors, materials, location, etc.); usually conducted at the end of the program; |
| Level 2 | <u>Learning:</u> what knowledge, skills or attitudes did the trainees actually acquire? Training providers normally are asked to demonstrate through “before and after” testing that they have effectively transferred the KSA requested; |
| Level 3 | <u>Application:</u> have the participants applied the newly acquired KSA on-the-job? The research to answer this question is usually conducted from 3 to 6 months after return. |
| Level 4 | <u>Organizational Performance Change:</u> discovers whether the application of KSA noted in Level 3 (if any) produced measurable changes in terms of the quantity and quality of the organization's output or production; often called simply “results,” level 4 is the highest evaluation finding. |

In a sense, monitoring can be viewed as the reverse of planning: one plans “down” from the sector, to the SO, the IR, the institution and finally, to the work unit; one then collects performance data in order to monitor results from training “up” from the work unit to the institution and back to the IRs. SO teams should try to *attribute changes* that are measured to the application of the KSAs the transfer of which USAID-funded training supported. It is not sufficient to simply note that an institution is improving.

Monitoring (and the application of all the Best Practices) will help SO teams understand the impact of their training investments, which in turn adds knowledge to USAID as a learning organization. If proper monitoring is conducted by SO teams throughout the year, the burden of gathering reporting data at the last minute, such as “R-4 time,” will be largely avoided.



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BEST PRACTICES FOR RESULTS-ORIENTED TRAINING

(From HRDA Best Practices Guide, 1996)

- ' Contribute to Strategic Planning
- ' Collaborate with Stakeholders
- ' Identify Training Needs in Partner Institutions
- ' Contribute to Improvements in Organizational Performance
- ' Select Trainees with the Greatest Potential to Initiate and Support Change
- ' Work with Trainees to focus on Performance Improvements
- ' Design Cost-Effective and Targeted Training Programs
- ' Monitor Training for Results
- ' Provide Follow-On support to Trainees and Partner Institutions

The *Best Practices Guide*, from which the above is drawn, is a “road map to help navigate the process of training.” The destination point is where training makes its optimal contribution to achieving USAID strategic objectives. The practices are **road signs** of what needs to be done to achieve results. The practices are not listed in sequential order; you may implement elements of a number of practices at various points in the process of managing training for results.